

VO SPECTATOR

John 8:32: Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

EDITED BY

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Keeping the 'Mass' in Christmas

by GRACE HATCHARD

It's around this time of year when spirits are brighter and many are merry with anticipation of the most spectacular holiday, Christmas. Though there is no harm in blasting some Bing Crosby while searching Amazon for the perfect gift, those types of distractions make it easy to lose sight of what really matters during the season.

Christmas offers us the opportunity to reflect upon the reason for the season: Jesus. Though some may forget to incorporate Christ in their Christmas celebrations, there are many ways to acknowledge and be reminded of him in order to humble ourselves during a time marked by extreme materialism.

1. Attend Midnight Mass

The culmination of the Christmas season comes down to mass on Christmas day, and there is no better way to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the holiday than by attending midnight mass. Midnight mass is truly magical, and starting off Christmas day with mass sets the tone for the rest of the day to follow, making sure we remember the reason why there are presents and a pine scented home to go to.

2. Sing Carols

Among all of the popular Christmas songs that grace our ears over the month of December, there are many songs that are more focused spiritually during the Christmas season. Not all of these songs are straight out of the hymn books at church--many well-known and beloved Christmas songs are spiritually-centered.

This could often be overlooked since there are a certain set of songs that rotate and play ad nauseum, but if you take time to observe the lyrics of the more religiously-minded tunes, you'll ground yourself in the true intention of the holiday.

By being reminded of the reason for the season through song, it is effortless to simply sing along and spread the message to others. Here are five Jesus-centric Christmas songs to catch on the radio this winter:

- Michael Buble's rendition of "Ave Maria"

- Pentatonix's "Mary Did You Know?"
- Josh Groban's "O Holy Night"
- Lindsey Stirling's "We Three Gentlemen"
- Nat King Cole's "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

3. Immerse in Advent Literature

As many members of the Catholic Church know, Advent is celebrated starting four Sundays away from Christmas. Advent is a time to give back and be joyful with anticipation of Jesus's birth on December 25th. Though some families prefer to be reminded through mass each Sunday and lighting the candles of the Advent wreath, there is more that can be done to enrich the experience. The Advent season is the perfect time to reconnect with scripture and be mindful of the importance of Christ's birth.

If you're not so familiar with the best Bible verses for the month of December, check out a free daily devotional or advent app, which can start or end your day with a five-minute meditation. It's a busy time of year, but this is a quick tech-friendly way to realign yourself before getting ready for school or just before going to sleep.

4. Participate in a Live Nativity

At many churches, the Holiday season is a time when parishioners come together to reenact the birth of Jesus and the nativity scene. This reenactment holds a very special significance in the church community, as allows church members to immerse themselves in the spiritual night of Jesus's birth--what brought Christmas it's purpose. Bethany Weaver (11) participates in a live nativity at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Spring Grove. Weaver says that it is a great way to "get the community to come out and see what we believe in," as the event highlights the "beauty of the night Jesus was born." Weaver said that by participating in a live nativity around the holidays, it is a great reminder that "the faith is still active in the community" and "Jesus is still able to shine through it all" during Christmas time.

5. Do acts of goodwill and service

The Christmas season is the perfect time to re-

mind people how fortunate they are, giving them motivation to use the holidays as a time to give back to their communities. Participating in acts of Christian service around Christmas time--whether it be donating winter clothes, serving Christmas dinner at a shelter or food pantry, or donating toys to underprivileged kids--is the perfect way to be reminded of God's will for us to be kind and compassionate beings.

Giving back is a great way to honor Jesus and his birth during the holiday season and be reminded of why we celebrate Christmas in the first place. I mean, Jesus was born in a manger that was lent to Mary and Joseph out of love and service. The Christmas season begins and ends with giving back.

But if you don't feel comfortable to help out in the aforementioned ways, or if you can't afford to donate financially, donate your time and intentions instead. Especially now, there are likely people in your neighborhood who could use some help or need some holiday cheer. Ask around; help where you can; demonstrate the significance of Christmas to all.

6. Show Younger Siblings (or Cousins) Some Love

Younger siblings can sometimes be a pain, but at Christmas, try taking time from your life to connect with them in a meaningful way by doing some meaningful Advent activities with them. Bake a cookie nativity, make a nativity shadow jar, or decorate a birthday cake for Jesus. No matter what you do, remember to treat your tiny relatives with love and respect (and maybe keep them busy while your parents are prepping for the holidays).

It's not very challenging to get lost in all of the tinsel and wrapping paper that comes with the holidays, but try to do something that will remind you of why Christmas is even celebrated in the first place. After all, Jesus IS the reason for the season.

St. Nicholas Day: A Holiday Tradition through the Ages

by RYAN SHANKO

Who was Saint Nicholas? Why do we celebrate him? What makes this man and his day so special? Saint Nicholas was born on March 15, 270 AD in a small city in Greece. Christianity was just beginning in the eastern world, making its way to Greece and subsequently to our young, Saint Nicholas. Religion was a big part of Nicholas's life from a young age, and as he grew up, his love for religion grew as well.

While not much is known about the early life of Saint Nicholas, the grand impression he makes comes from the writings and tales created after his death, telling his wondrous deeds. These deeds have led to him becoming the patron saint of many different vocations of life, such as sailors, merchants, children, and students.

This brings us to the "why" of Saint Nicholas. Saint Nicholas is celebrated because of his wide-

spread generosity in the form of gift-giving to the poor. Saint Nicholas gave gold to the poor, food to the hungry, and bestowed the aid of God's miracles.

If you've ever celebrated Christmas, you can thank Saint Nicholas for the gifts you receive. On his feast day of December 6, Saint Nicholas would fill the shoes of children with sweets and other presents to reward them for being good all year. This could be seen as the beginning of perhaps the world's greatest tradition, and by far the favorite holiday of millions of people, Christmas, and its far lesser known counterpart, Saint Nicholas Day.

I have been lucky enough to have a lifelong connection to this special holiday because of my elementary school, Saint Patrick's Catholic School. Every year, our priest, Father Carroll, would dress up as Ol' Saint Nick and come to our classrooms, bringing holiday spirit and candy canes for everyone. What could be better than that for a 4th grader?

Every year, we would put our shoes in the hallway during school and the doors would close and we would go about our class without shoes, brimming with excitement. While our shoes were in the hallway, "Saint Nicholas" would visit us and

fill our shoes with chocolates, candy canes and other little gifts. At the end of the day, we would rush to our shoes and empty them out, joyously comparing the awesome gifts we had received. This seemingly simple holiday tradition has been a large part of my love for the Christmas season today, and I am extremely grateful for each time I was able to be a part of these special Saint Nicholas Day celebrations. I urge you to safely celebrate Saint Nicholas Day with your friends and family this year on December 6th.



Artwork by Mairin Landis

SEASONAL PSYCHOLOGY

by JACK STROMBERG

When the horizon light slowly sets on the Thanksgiving season, a new societal ambience dawns. The Christmas season, the annual era of wonder and joy, begins, where the most jolly of men showers the globe in his selfless presents. But sadly, gifts from Mr. Claus stagnate at a certain age, unless you are on the naughty list of course, so it is an obligation to take up his gift-giving mantle.

Christmas is a time of sacrifice, and this sacrifice manifests in the act of gift-giving. People from all backgrounds pour their time, money, energy, and varying effort into pinpointing or crafting the utmost poignant gift for their friends and families. It is admittedly a touch sappy, but the connections gained from the junction of giving and receiving presents defines what most picture as the holiday season. Yet, why does taking away something from yourself invoke such warm feelings? And what factors determine the emotional potency of a gift?

Determining a “good” gift is actually an intricate psychological process with a lot of emotional consequences, many which go unnoticed. When giving something away, our brain releases an abnormal amount of endorphins, which is akin to the hormones which work to relieve pain in the body, unless you are a sociopath. In addition, the receiver’s contrary reaction can greatly bolster, or wreck (hopefully not), our internal feelings of solidarity to the community. According to Charles Darwin, communities who contain “the greatest number of sympathetic members, would flourish best” (Wen).

While many fret over the amount of money determining the importance of a gift, this is far from the truth. In fact, psychology professor Elizabeth Dunn proposes that focusing on monetary value poses the opportunity for risk in a relationship as “it shows you don’t have anything in common” with the other person (Suttie). By placing an arbitrary value on a present, it can soil the emotional connection with feelings of falsehood, but to any genuine Christmas enthusiast, this quirk is obvious.

However, as steadfast shoppers hunt for the most emotionally poignant gift, they tend to forget about practicality and longevity. While it is hilarious to watch your significant other open their Joe Biden mask, the effect quickly fades and realization sets in. Christmas season is a time to combat the woes of reality, and it is important to consider that a good long-lasting gift can help elongate the warmth of Christmas. This idea has been gaining a lot of traction recently, as studies by marketing Professor Jeff Galak show, social favor towards longevity has sprung in marketing ploys such as prescription streaming services (Suttie). People just prefer to have practicality in the long run, as it makes certain difficulties of life less of a burden, even if the gift is miniscule.

With the principles of practicality and longevity in place, now it is crucial to consider the most important factor, an ancient cliché as old as good ol’ Saint Nick: the thought behind the gift, which of course, counts most. But what’s the best thought process to ensure a most gracious gift?

Start at the foundation of any friendship: mutual interests. People form bonds of friendship because of beliefs, experiences, hobbies, and yes, thinking and searching difficult tasks, but think of what you yourself would like based on a mutual interest. When the previously mentioned factors are combined with this simple process, it can ensure an emotionally satisfying present to both parties.

And more importantly, it amplifies the length of the Christmas season and its whimsical wonder and will grant you an optical gift giving prowess that rivals that of Santa Claus himself.

STRESSED, A MESS, BUT AT ENGLISH, THEY’RE THE BEST!

by GINA BOLLI and DOMINIC BLANCHARD

The honors American Literature junior class last year was given a special opportunity to choose between two AP courses for their senior year. There was, of course, Mrs. Euclide’s AP Literature, but there was also Mrs. Henson’s new AP Language course. The AP Language course was introduced into the York Catholic curriculum this year; it’s a class generally designed for juniors, but because the class of ‘21 didn’t get a chance to take it, it was offered to seniors, too.

English has always been one of our more enjoyable subjects, so of course, after hearing Mrs. Henson describe AP Lit and AP Lang, we just couldn’t decide which we wanted to take more. So we decided to ask Mrs. Henson if it were possible for us to take both AP English courses, to which she replied, “As a teacher, I’m supposed to advise against that.” But luckily she was confident enough in our abilities to vouch for us, so long as we promised to not take a math or science course.

Of course, as if taking two AP English courses wasn’t academically crippling enough, we also thought it to be an excellent idea to take journalism (which is also technically a college course) on top of it. Due to the unique circumstances, we co-authors of this article (Gina and Dominic) are perhaps the only YC students who can ever say they took three college-level writing heavy courses at the same time.

At this point of the year, we don’t know whether or not to recommend doing such a thing to yourself. One thing is for sure, you have got to really enjoy English class and have a strong desire to improve your writing skills if you want to do what we did. Sure we may have a rhetorical analysis, a literature paper, and a journalism article due on the same day more than once a week, but at least we don’t have to solve a single calculus problem! That’s a pretty fair trade.

Although the writing component of all three classes can be pretty demanding, that’s not the only thing we’ve had to stress about. Oh sure, you can complain about having to read the first act of *Romeo and Juliet* over the weekend, but until you are given 3 books to read at a time, we don’t want to hear it. One of the few cons with taking both AP English courses is that they aren’t meant to coexist with one another. Sometimes, things work out nicely. We’ll have a super heavy week of AP Lang with timed essays every night (that are really just hit or miss, unless you’re Mairin Landis) plus whatever other work Mrs. Henson decides to pile on, but then Mrs. Euclide gives us a nice week on poetry with a couple nights of light homework. And some weeks, it will be vice versa.

Unfortunately sometimes we have those doubly loaded weeks. We used to complain about reading 30 pages of *The Things They Carried* last year, but that was nothing after we had to read about 6 chapters of *A Tale of Two Cities*, 75 pages of *In Cold Blood*, plus at least 30 minutes of your independent novel (as required by Mrs. Henson). Oh, and we had to be ready for a quiz on one of them, write journal entries for another, and if we were unlucky enough that we read to the end of a book in *A Tale of Two Cities*, we had to submit an analysis of some kind, all on the same day. And let’s not forget about that journalism article that’s due either!

Speaking of doubling the workload, how about double the periods? Or tripling them--sometimes quadrupling them! Now this really just depends on chance. We have AP Lit 3rd period, study hall 4th, and AP Lang 5th, but on A and E days, we have a double block for AP Lit, so we don’t have a break between English classes, and thus end up with three English periods in a row. Furthermore, Mrs. Henson sometimes steals part of our lunch periods for extra-long tests or further discussion, so we can end up having about 2.5 hours of English class. Fun.

Probably the most annoying thing about taking three English courses (besides the constant reminder from Mrs. Henson that we “chose this life”) is the different writing styles. AP Literature, AP Language, and Journalism are three entirely different subjects, despite them all being English courses.

AP Literature focuses on specific literary titles and how an author develops a theme and uses it to argue his or her point. This is a great class, until you get several comments from Mrs. Euclide that states that your



Gina Bolli poses with a stack of all the books she has read so far this year for her combined AP English classes.

conclusion is “not a time for a lesson,” when over in Mrs. Henson’s class, synthesizing is all about global outreach (without sounding like a Hallmark card). Apparently literary authors are just too stubborn to look beyond their own central themes.

AP Language is the complete opposite of AP Literature. No longer can you use literary devices in your thesis. It is all about finding the argument and figuring out how that author makes his point clear while explaining the rhetorical strategies used. Rhetorical authors find that literary devices are too much to put in a thesis, so instead we are forced to introduce them subtly in the paragraphs, going against everything we have been taught to do.

Then comes Journalism, sometimes a breath of fresh air, and other times (more like the majority of the time) it just adds on more stress. It’s easier in the sense that the assignments are typically less writing than a typical English essay, but more difficult in the sense that there is no leeway when it comes to submitting articles. Basically, if you are late to submit one article, you can say goodbye to your nearly perfect grade. Not to mention, Mrs. Henson never allows for late assignments (unless technology is not nice).

On top of the three different expectations and writing styles, each class is also weighted differently. We can attest that in all the classes, we have very different grades (with Journalism ranking among the highest). Probably the hardest class is AP Language due to the fact that we constantly have to write essays, along with multiple choice “practices” that the vast majority of us do terribly on.

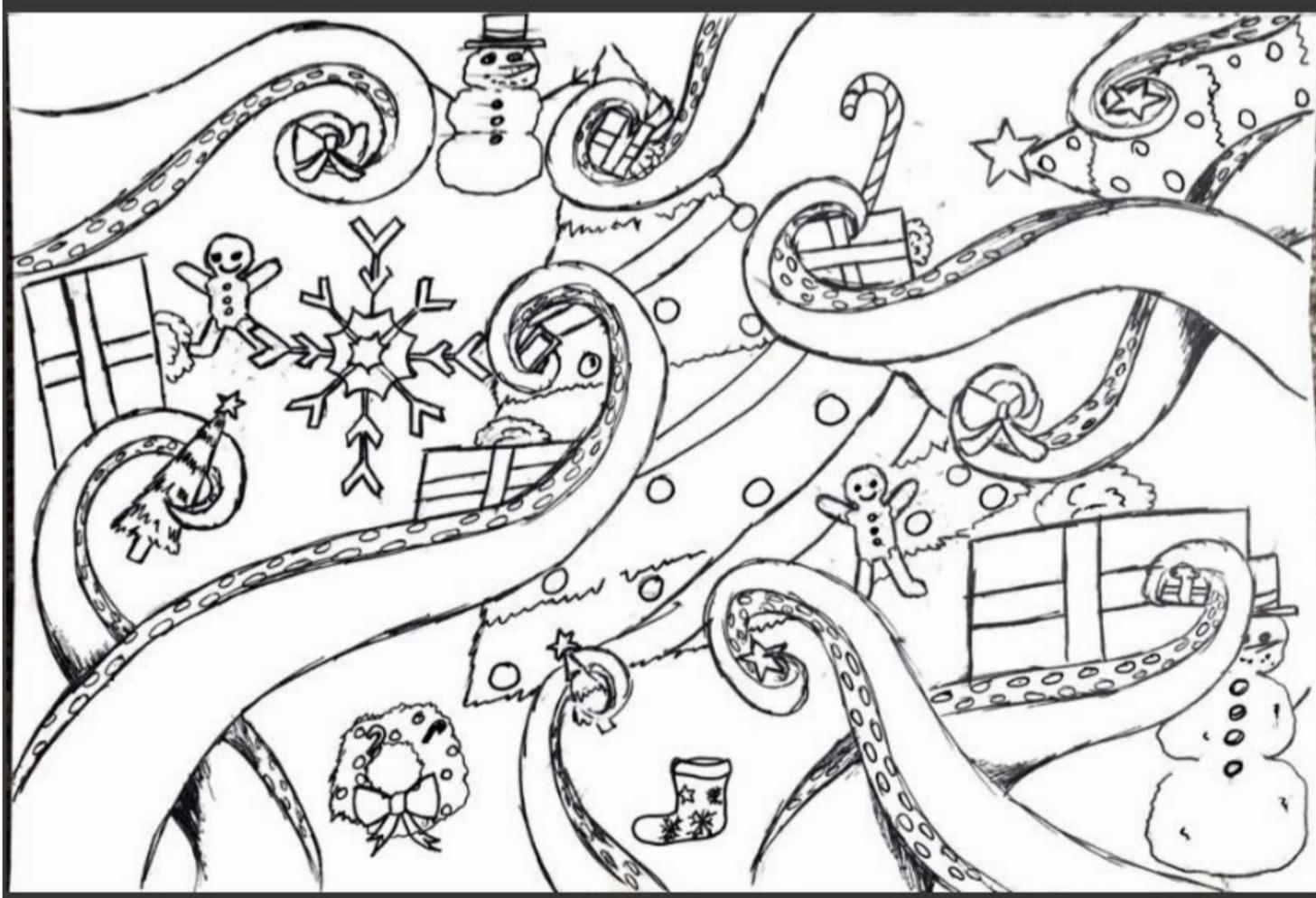
AP Literature is slightly better in this regard as we do not have nearly as many assignments, but the transition between the different writing styles still shows every once in a while. Literature is definitely the more comfortable AP class content-wise, as we read a variety of types of works, so if there is something we’re better at (like poetry or short fiction), we know we’ll get a chance to prove it; in Language, though, we’re constantly in a grind of nonfiction essays. Language, however, contains Mrs. Henson’s famous life lessons that we’re sure anyone can attest are life-altering, and we never come out of that class the same, even if 15 minutes prior she was just berating us on our terrible essays.

Besides this though, these English courses are amazing. We cannot put into words the amazing opportunity that York Catholic and the English Department has given us in being able to pursue our passions, even if it is against all commonality.

Despite all of the hardships and struggles we may face, we will never regret (for the most part) taking three English courses. The experience thus far has been enriching and captivating, and honestly we cannot wait for our English classes, as they give us true happiness and encouragement to pursue any difficulty that we may face in life.

OCTOPUS CHRISTMAS

By: Kellie McKnight



Whoops! Kelvin the Christmas Octopus has dropped his bag of holiday cheer, and he needs your help to decorate his house in time for Sea-Santa's arrival. Find everything on Kelvin's list and you'll find yourself on Sea-Santa's Nice List!

WHAT TO FIND:

- 5 gifts
- 2 snowmen
- 4 christmas trees
- 1 wreath
- 3 bows
- 2 gingerbread men
- 1 Christmas stocking
- 5 Christmas stars
- 10 Octopus tentacles

A Curious Case of Christmas Nostalgia

by GINA BOLLI

With good feelings all around, candy canes being thrown at you, that refreshing Christmas tree smell, and watching Disney Christmas specials instead of doing homework, there's no doubt that just about everyone enjoys the holidays.

However, the jolliness is almost always accompanied by something a little more heavy hearted. When decorating the Christmas tree with old family photos and ornaments you made in kindergarten, there's that familiar swelling of the heart that you just can't quite shake. It's a happy moment, yes, but it comes with a slight twinge of sadness.

Rest assured, Christmas nostalgia is a natural occurrence that everyone is afflicted with come December (or November for some of you oddballs). It's healthy even, as your personal nostalgia gives you a unique sense of identity.

For those of you who don't know, nostalgia of any kind is defined as a longing for the past. Hearing a song from your childhood can trigger a bit of heartache for simpler times, but it brings back a warm memory. Similarly, nostalgia at Christmas simply means remembering moments from past Christmas seasons. And since this time of year is often the most joyous and heartfelt, the memories are even stronger.

Upon receiving this article assignment, I of course had to conduct self-afflicted research. This unfortunately entailed tuning into the Christmas radio station in early November (and watching *Mickey's Once Upon a Christmas*) in order to get in the mood. Naturally, I felt the bittersweet effects of Christmas nostalgia. Truth be told, I still didn't know how to approach this common phenomenon. That is, until a friend texted me a surprise link. It led to a folder of songs that were recorded last year during my choir's Christmas mass.

Now, the rewatching of Christmas movies and wearing my fuzzy Santa socks made my heart ache in nostalgia slightly, but this kind of reminiscing was on a whole new level. I spent the next hour reliving last year's Christmas Eve mass; how we had those extra practices outside of the church to prepare the music for Advent, how we used to gather around the piano huddled over our song books, how last Advent was the first time I had to sing the gospel acclamation on my own, and most especially, how lovely we all sounded for that 9pm Christmas Eve mass. It was this that hit me more than anything. In fact, probably more than any nostalgia of any year. But why was this particular memory so painfully nostalgic?

Perhaps because it was specifically last year's Christmas I was thinking about. A year ago, our lives weren't dictated by a global pandemic. Just about all of us had a normal Christmas season rich with happy memories. Not only was Coronavirus a problem far away from us, but it was before the extreme unrest and division that seemed to massacre the country in 2020.

This year made every other year of our life seem so simple and carefree. Of course we now yearn for that simpleness that seemed to slip through our fingers last March. Because of this, nostalgia in general seems to be at an all time high this year. Since everyone is already hit with an enhanced wave

of nostalgia every Christmas season, I think it's safe to say that we should all be prepared for a particularly stronger impact, especially considering how different our Christmas may look this year.

As happy as the holidays usually are, any level of nostalgia can render you a little more emotional than you'd like. Hannah Fischer (11) is in the same nostalgic boat as me. Her fondest bittersweet memory is of her own choir singing for Christmas Eve mass. Better yet, Hannah also made her entire choir proud when she took on a solo. Wesley Bonner (12) thinks back on when he was 8 years old and building a model airplane with his father while it was snowing outside. On the other hand, Riley Santiago (12) thinks about his family's "Horrible or Lame Present" (HOLP) tradition, where family members pass and exchange unappealing gifts. He likes to reminisce on a particular nostalgic time he and his cousin got HOLPed with a hairy pot-belly fanny-pack.

There is simply no way to avoid it. All of these memories, while happy, can make people miss what they believed to be better times, especially now, when we remember the maskless, not-so-socially-distant Christmas festivities we did last year.

Even without the added benefit of past Christmas seasons not being in the middle of a pandemic, there is something so charming about a type of happiness you may never feel again. Even if each year is better than the last, you will never achieve the same seasonal joy as you did in your youth. But, with each passing year, you will have one more Christmas to look back on in your depths of nostalgia.

Your heart swelling in bittersweetness upon thinking of happy Christmas memories may be a little more bitter than sweet, especially if some of you are upset about not being able to celebrate Christmas the way we normally do. I say, there is only one way to combat this overwhelming sentiment, which will no doubt be more powerful this year. Simply, look at this season as an opportunity to make new unique memories.

Whether it's adjusting plans with friends to fit CDC guidelines, or elaborating on an old family tradition that had to change this year. With a little creativity, nostalgia won't be as unbearable. Maybe I can't sing with my choir for Christmas this year, or maybe some of you can't travel to see family members, whatever the case may be, there's no use in moping around and allowing memories of "better times" to consume you.

After all, socially distant caroling could be a thing! And who says you can't have a zoom family reunion or meet at the ice-rink with your friends (wearing masks of course). Why not start an ugly Christmas mask tradition too? The possibilities for this season are endless!

The nostalgia will be inevitable, and there's nothing wrong with remembering simpler, better times, but remember to take the time this year to make new memories rather than dwelling on old ones.

And if the memories you make this year come back as an even stronger wave of nostalgia next year, you'll know you did it right.

Grandma's Cookies

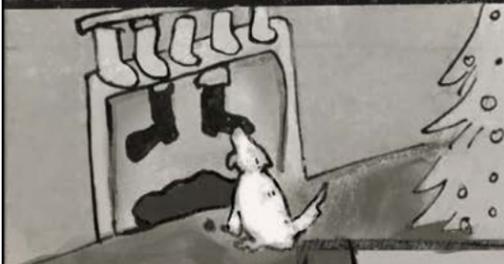
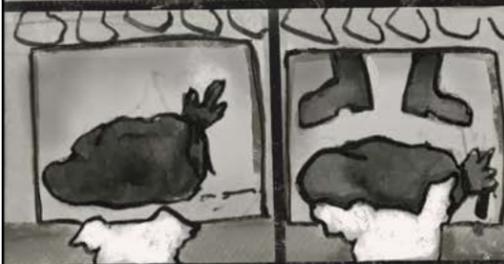
by KENDEL CONNOLLY

Deliciously chocolate, never store bought,
Grandma's cookies come out hot.
Sugar cookies, rainbow sprinkles,
My grandma smiles, and her forehead
wrinkles.

Not too crunchy and not too soft,
These sweet cookies cannot be topped.
Don't overbake them they'll be crunchy;
Before you bake, put your hair in a scrunchie.

Lots of butter and some flour,
The cookies will be ready in an hour.
Next goes in some sugar and spice,
Even decorated, they look nice!
Icing or fondant-- I'll let you choose.
Grandma's cookies cannot lose.

My grandma's cookies are delicious,
But they're not the least nutritious.
Nothing is better than homemade,
When they aren't fresh-- be afraid.
Boy, that is one handsome cookie,
Don't try to bake them if you're a rookie.



OVER-ZELIS ADVICE: HOW TO TRAIN A DOG

by JOE ZELIS

Everybody knows man's best friend, that little fluffy puff ball with legs that we all love so much, that's right-- the dogs. Since ancient times, the symbiotic relationship between humans and dogs has been said to better the human race itself. But how did our early ancestors first domesticate these carnivorous beasts? That is what I aim to find out as I take on the trying challenge of training a dog.

An additional challenge was made clear to me right away; I don't have a dog. I was going to have to improvise. In some pet-less families, they refer to their youngest sibling as their pet, and this inspired me. I may not have a dog, but I do have Anthony.

Anthony is 12 years old with brown hair and blue eyes. This little fellow has already been taught how to do tricks such as reading, writing, riding a bike, and playing video games; I must admit, this is very impressive for any pet. Most dogs are only able to sit, give paw, and maybe play dead. However, there are some things that this kiddo still cannot do.

For example, as a Boy Scout, he should learn basic first aid skills before ranking up. These skills will have real world application, unlike trivial party-tricks such as rolling over, giving paw, and reading. As I struggled to teach Anthony how to save lives, I was struck with a much more conventional idea. Why not just borrow someone else's dog and attempt to train that?

So, with a newfound determination, I made the perilous journey across the yard to ask my next door neighbors, the Kochenours, if I could borrow one of their many animals for my experiment. Lucky for me (and Anthony), they kindly agreed. Great! Now that I have my test subject, all that's left to do is learn how to actually train animals. Following a quick Google search, I proceed, armed with treats and positive reinforcement, to tame the foul beast they call Rocky.

Rocky is a 13-year-old Pomeranian, and let me tell you-- this was way more difficult than training Anthony. The thing about dogs is that you can't actually explain to them what you want in the same way you can with people. As I struggled to teach Rocky to give paw, I was faced with a problem like no other. You know that saying, "you can't teach an old dog a new trick?" I think there might be some truth behind that. In my laborious attempts to educate Rocky, I started with basic commands like sit and stay, both of which worked maybe half the time, if I was lucky.

How do people actually train dogs? I was struggling within the first 30 minutes of the process, and

those professional trainers do it basically all day every day. One thing that I did figure out pretty early on is that if the dog doesn't see you, it won't listen. Rocky is constantly looking around, so he very rarely pays any attention to me, and even less frequently listens.

When training a dog, you should use positive reinforcement. This can be done with physical affection and treats. Even after attempting both methods, however, all Rocky really wanted to do was go inside. And so, after the first exhausting and soul crushing session, I called it a day and vowed to return in the morning.

With the knowledge gained the day before, I once again devoted myself to teaching Rocky how to do paw. Surely this time, I thought, by reinforcing what I taught yesterday, I would be able to teach him. To my utter disappointment, the same ends were met. Rocky shall continue tragically through his life without the knowledge of how to give paw.

Finally, after countless attempts, I admitted to a loss. This Pomeranian had bested me without even trying. Through this experience, I gained a new respect for anyone with the time and patience to train dogs, because it is much harder than it seems.

Perhaps next time I attempt dog training it will end more favorably, but for now, consider me defeated.



(Pictured Left The Foul Beast, Rocky)

HOW TO TRAIN A ZELIS

by MAIRIN LANDIS

Joe Zelis (12), a senior writer for the *YC Spectator*, was recently assigned an article where he explored the wonderful world of dog training (above). He compared attempting to train his neighbor's Pomeranian, Rocky, with his 12 year-old-brother. The irony of his situation was completely lost on him, however, as I discovered when speaking with Laura Laux (12), senior editor of the *Spectator* and last year's editor of the Lifestyle column.

Zelis is a frequent writer for Lifestyle-- a staple, even. He is one of the only fixtures with guaranteed monthly articles, coined as the infamous "Over-Zelis Advice." His guaranteed publishing, however, is not necessarily due to his overwhelming quality of writing so much as his namesake. This is not to say that Joe is a bad writer, but he is a lazy one. The quality of his articles ranges, but it is generally obvious that they were written in about 10 minutes during another class, with no regard for the editors responsible for his pieces. I can personally assure you that grammar and Joe Zelis have never met.

Last year, Laux was the junior editor for the Lifestyle column of the *Spectator*-- a position which I have inherited. Although the writing staff changes from year to year, Zelis and his advice are here to stay indefinitely. Upon discussion of Joe's peculiar set of skills and requirements, specifically to do with his recent article, we struck a revelation.

"I basically had Joe trained to write better by the

end of last year," Laura brags confidently in response to my struggle to get Joe to write more than a sentence. We had decided to reward his good behavior of actually writing his article before the due date by publishing it, and were reflecting on how to best encourage this behavior in the future.

When I asked how she trained him, she went into detail about the necessity of verbal positive reinforcement, and even edible rewards, bringing him food for good behavior. When he didn't complete things on time, or his articles were sub-par in quality, he was verbally abused and oftentimes whacked by an old copy of *The YC Spectator*.

"So, you trained him?" I asked, redundantly. "Yeah, I had to," Laux replied, to which I continued, "Like a dog?" She was awestruck. "Oh my gosh," she gasped, "It is like training a dog!" From the newspaper whacking, to the treats, to the positive reinforcement, Laura had perfected the craft of shaping Joe into a much less bad writer-- a feat Joe recently tried, and failed, to accomplish himself.

The problem arises now, tragically, as I take up the task of editing for Lifestyle in Laura's place. Unfortunately, I don't scare Joe as much as Laura does, and he has fallen back into his bad habits since quarantine and summer break. I pray that I find more success in training him than he's found previously; until then, when the byline reads "Joe Zelis," read as: Laura Laux, Mairin Landis.

Santa Showdown!

by ASHLYN O'NEILL

Santa is obviously the guy in the red suit with the big white beard. Being as famous as he is, he appears in nearly every holiday-themed movie; therefore, naturally there is a lot of debate as to who plays the role of Santa best. Through my extensive research and watching and rewatching a bunch of Christmas movies, I believe I have determined the best rendition of Santa. But, of course, with a debate such as this, the public's opinion was needed. After all, Santa is arguably one of the most iconic aspects of Christmas, and he needs to be represented well in any type of media portrayal.

Personality and engagement are the things that are most necessary to play a great Santa and that's usually the key aspect movie producers look for when casting a Santa (nobody wants a boring Santa). *Elf* is arguably one of the most engaging and personable Christmas movies out there, so the Santa that appears in *Elf* is no exception to the overall theme of the movie. This Santa is Emilio Gurany's (12) favorite because he believes the actor portrays Santa "very well" in conjunction with the theme of the rest of the movie. Furthermore, Santa's representation works well with the overall message of the importance of Christmas cheer. Sophomore Anna Zallnick (10) agrees with Emilio's assessment of the Santa in *Elf* adding that she loves "everything about the movie--especially Santa" and mentioned she had "watched the movie since she was little" putting reasoning and experience behind her choice of the best live-action Santa.

The Miracle on 34th Street is another popular movie with another well-played Santa. This movie caters to the more traditional elements of Christmas including the start of the holiday season, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Another modern element presented in the movie occurs with a court case, where there is a battle over the psychological makeup of Santa. Characters in the movie think he's crazy for saying and believing he's "the Real Santa," thinking he should be brought to justice for being inauthentic. Michael McKnight (12) likes this movie because of the "intrigue" and "complex story" instead of the usual ordeals that Santa goes through in the usual Christmas movie (like not having enough elves to make presents, or missing a few kids on Christmas Eve). Santa does not often appear in a courtroom or undergo psychological evaluations so Edmund Gwenn, the actor

who portrayed Santa in this movie, had quite the challenge considering there was little to go on for reference.

Finally, the most beloved Santa, and my personal favorite, is none other than Tim Allen himself from *The Santa Clause* movie trilogy. Tim Allen embodies everything that Santa needs to have: an infectious amount of joy, a witty sense of humor, a desire for cookies, a great personality on and off the screen, and, of course, he has the "Santa look." Tim Allen's rendition of Santa is very popular among York Catholic students and Kelleigh Pollock (12) attests that he is also her "favorite Santa of all time." She has loved Tim Allen for "many years," and always "makes it a point to watch all three movies in the series multiple times each Christmas." Similarly, Caroline Smith (12) also happens to love Tim Allen calling the series a "Christmas classic."

It does help that the scripts of the *Santa Clause* movies are so well thought out, but what Tim Allen does with the script in his acting is why he is at the top of the list. Scout Miller (9) agrees, and "enjoys the story" and writing of the movie very much. The extensive acting experience of Allen along with his relatable personality to the common person, especially children, made him play such a good Santa. This movie has become a classic due to the fact the Christmas experiences by Tim Allen's character and his family in the movie could very well happen to other families but *The Santa Clause* series has just the right amount of Christmas magic sprinkled in the story as well.

There's a lot that goes into making the perfect live-action Santa. The actor needs to embody the very heart of Christmas. So it's a daunting task. Yet when done correctly, can be magical for people of all ages. And sure, everybody has a different opinion on which Santa is the absolute best but the fact is that no matter your personal preference, every Santa brings something special to the table. There are many more Santas than just the three aforementioned and each rendition just adds to the Christmas magic that's always in the air. Playing Santa is a sacred role, and while some Santa movies outshine others, all of them were worth a watch to help get you in the Christmas spirit!

XBOX REVIEW

by EVAN WEBSTER

It's hard to believe, but it's true: the Xbox One is almost 7 years old as of today. The crazy (and probably unhealthy) amount of hours I've spent on it has come to an end as it's time to put the Xbox One to rest. Luckily, I was fortunate enough to get the next generation Xbox a few days after it's release. I've already put a decent amount of time on the new console, and I have to say I really enjoy it. So, I've decided to review my experiences with it thus far.

I'll start by saying I was surprised at how reasonably priced it was. The Series X costs \$500, about how much the Xbox One did at its launch in 2013, despite the technological upgrades the Xbox Series X has over the One. Xbox also released the Series S, a more budget-friendly version of the next-gen console which is slightly less powerful but knocks \$100 off of the price. The Xbox Series X costs the same as the new PlayStation 5, even though the new Xbox has slightly better hardware. Overall, I think the price is quite reasonable for what you are getting.

Secondly, the new Xbox is a very big upgrade over the previous Xbox in terms of its hardware. This upgraded hardware makes the console more powerful, durable, and it'll last for a longer time. Plus, I've already noticed the significantly shorter time spent on loading screens. There is also more storage on the Series X, (about 1Tb worth), while the standard Xbox One had a mere 500Gb. This means you are able to have twice the amount of games or apps installed on your console. Another apparent upgrade is the graphics. The Series X is able to play most games at 4k resolution and 60 frames per second. It also is able to run much smoother at this high resolution. In layman's terms: the games will look better.

Another aspect of the new console I really like are the controllers. I've noticed some gamers online complain because the controllers that come with the new Xbox are very similar to the controllers for the older Xbox. I personally find this to be nice. It is nice to have a similar feel-

ing controller that isn't going to take getting used to. Also, you can even use the older, Xbox One controllers on the Series X and vice versa. That's a very nice aspect because if you have the controller from your old console then you automatically have a spare or alternate controller. The major thing that is unfortunate about the new controller is that it still runs on AA batteries, instead of using a built in rechargeable battery. This can be solved by buying a rechargeable battery pack to put in your controller, however, it would have been nice if the controller upgraded to a built in battery. Nevertheless, while the controller is nothing special, it gets the job done.

My final point about the Series X is the backwards compatibility. For those of you not into video games, this means the games are able to transfer from an older console to a newer one. Xbox really hit a homerun with this on the new consoles. From what I've read online and from what I've seen so far from my experience, every single Xbox One game can be played on the Series X. As well as all of the games from the Xbox 360 and even some from the original Xbox that were playable on the Xbox One. Also the progress you've made on these games also carries over. It's insane to be able to play four generations worth of games on the same console. It's also nice if, like me, you've sunk unspeakable amounts of money into your game library, and you thankfully don't have to go out and re-buy your favorite games like you had to when the Xbox One first came out. This is an amazing feature as it really helps to pick back up right where you left off on the older console.

All-in-all, The Xbox Series X is well worth the money. It is the most powerful console out right now. Its backwards compatible games and controllers will help you seamlessly transition to the next generation of console gaming. I highly recommend the new Xbox Series X if you are still using the Xbox One. It is truly the next generation of console gaming.

SEASONAL SIPS

by HOPE LEAVY-GASKINS

Christmas is on the way, and Starbucks is ready with all new holiday drinks! This year they brought back all the holiday favorites, and I went and ordered a variety to review for all those seasonal beverage lovers out there. These include, Peppermint Mocha, Caramel Brulee Lattes, Toasted White Chocolate Mocha, Chestnut Praline Lattes, Pumpkin Cream Cold Brews, Salted Caramel Cold Brews, and Peppermint Mocha Frappuccinos.

Starbucks is known for their modifiable menu, meaning your latte can be turned into a frappuccino and vice versa. Although not all of these Christmas inspired drinks are my go to, it is always fun to switch things up! The first drink I ordered was the white chocolate mocha iced latte, to me this just tasted like iced coffee with vanilla, but topped with whipped cream and decorated with festive sprinkles the drink was very good. The second drink that stood out to me was the Caramel Brulee Latte which I turned into an iced drink. This was very good and bursting with a vanilla and cozy caramel flavor.

If caramel and vanilla isn't your cup of tea, or should I say coffee, Starbucks peppermint drinks are the way to go. In my opinion the peppermint mocha is one of the best drinks to represent this flavor. To me I think that peppermint can be a very overpowering flavor, but none of these drinks are too strong. The baristas definitely know what they are doing with these and make the drink flavors combine together perfectly, especially in this chocolate drink.

Not only are the seasonal drinks phenomenal and get you ready for the Christmas season, the service and the cups are also festive. Every year Starbucks comes up with new cup design ideas. This year the cups are striped with small ornaments and snowflakes that are red and green, this is also featured in the picture. Personally this is one of my favorite parts of getting the drinks. It makes me think of the winter season coming up and things to look forward to. Now let's talk about the baristas handing off the cups! Although Starbucks is usually very busy due to its popularity, the hard working staff make it worth the wait. The drinks and food that I ordered took only 5 minutes to get out and I was greeted with warm smiles.

Along with the signature winter themed drinks, the food is another way to go. Most of the food options stay the same no matter the season, but Starbucks did release their snowman cake pops once again. In my opinion it is one of the best things to order off the food menu.

Starbucks is known for many things when the Christmas season is coming up, whether it be the delicious drinks, amazing food, great service, or heart-warming packaging--it's obvious the company wants to satisfy every customer.. Whichever it is for you, mixing things up and trying some of their new options is the way to go. Don't forget to pay your way and be merry!

[Out]Going the Extra Mile

by GRACE HATCHARD

Who is it that we choose to lead us? I know that may seem like a very subjective question, but I want you all to think for a moment. Look to your principals, your teachers, your student councils, your church executives, and your governments. What is it about these people that assert them into an authoritative position over others?

Well it sure isn't the fact that they are introverted, as that is just a recipe for disaster. The myth of the "silent leader" is something that is very offensive to extroverts, as they have worked hard to put themselves in a position of dominance through their outgoingness just to be undermined by the person who has not said a word to anyone.

Not that being an introvert is bad, it's just that in order to be an effective leader, one must be outgoing. It would be impossible to captivate a crowd if your charisma levels are in the negatives.

To be a good leader, one must be personable. It takes talking to the people you are attempting to lead to understand and lead them better. Connecting with the people you lead also establishes trust and reassures the people that you care about their well being and leading them with the best intentions.

A silent may try, but they will ultimately fail at trying to connect with their followers. Without

that affable aspect of their personality, it would be hard to build relationships and always feel comfortable around their people; that's no way to try and lead the people when they can't stand and connect with the people.

Good leaders are completely dominant and assert their leadership over their followers. In order to stay in charge, it is imperative that leaders never let someone walk all over them, as it could show their group that they are weak, and people will never listen to someone who they see as weaker than them. A leader must be able to speak for themselves, and make decisions on behalf of the group. Even when they say or do things that may not please everyone, they do not allow it to deter them.

It is this exact instance where introverted leaders fail. As inherent people pleasers, silent leaders can never make their own executive decisions and tell their subordinates clear directions. They are always changing what they say and going back on decisions they make when their followers question them or suggest to them what to change about their leadership. Silent leaders allow their people to make them completely question their judgement, which is no example to set for the group.

Good leaders are confident and passionate.

Their extroverted personality allows them to be very opinionated, thus making it easy for them to take a fervish stance on any cause. It is this charisma and investment that inspires their followers to be just as willing and trusting in their cause, thus making the leader's overall effectiveness much more noticeable. Their confidence is contagious.

Lacking once again, it is the introverted leaders that are not quick to formulate a set opinion on a topic or event. Their passiveness is always trumped by other's aggression, which proves difficult to spark any fires of passion and zeal among their followers who can't even see these qualities in their own leader. Not to say that introverted leaders are not opinionated or that they have commitment issues, but they are not as willing to express themselves and impose their opinions onto others.

Being outgoing and all of the side effects of it breed a person to be a leader. Without the natural instinct to go out of your way to connect with others and network, a leader will fail to captivate any audience. Leaders are alphas not betas. One cannot call themselves an effective leader if they get nervous trying to order at a drive-thru.

HOLIDAY, HOLLY, AND HALLMARK

by HAYDEN MOUL

Hallmark movies are always looked past, and I have always wondered why. With the grade A acting, and 5 star special effects, they are hard not to love. Happy endings and the relatable plots are the key elements to any Hallmark movie. Some may think that all the movies have the same plot, a rich man or woman comes home and learns the real reason for Christmas. This common thought is completely wrong. All of the movies that play around Christmas are originally written and perfect for the holidays.

The best movie playing on the channel is *Switched at Christmas*. This movie follows twins during the holidays to find love when they go home, but the love interests of the movies do not know which twin is which. This movie is similar to the Parent Trap but with a holiday twist. After meeting for a holiday lunch, the sisters realize neither of them are happy with their lives so they decide to switch until Christmas. They both meet the love of their lives and learn to appreciate their lives back home. Of course this all happens perfectly around Christmas and along with learning to appreciate what they have, they learn the real meaning of Christmas. This movie is not what you would expect from a Christmas movie, but with all the twists and turns it keeps watchers on the edge of their seat the whole way through.

A movie that you might need to change the channel when it plays is *A Blue Ridge Christmas*. This movie follows a woman who comes home to Virginia for her sister's Christmas wedding. While spending time with her family she runs into a man who she knew growing up. They end up falling back in love in time for Christmas and she decides to stay in Virginia. This movie is the reason people think all Hallmark movies are the same. Even though it ends with a happy ending it does not have creative problems. If you want something on for background noise this movie is for you, however if you are looking for an original movie this one should be skipped.

Lastly but definitely not least is *The Sweetest Christmas*. In this movie, the audience follows a young baker who is expecting a proposal from her former boyfriend, but is let down. She runs into her ex-boyfriend from high school who she broke up with when she moved. They ran into each other when she had come home for a gingerbread house competition. While she is preparing for the many stages of this competition she learns a lot about herself. The more and more time she spends with her high school love, they learn that the feelings never went away and they get back together, of course in time for Christmas. This movie can be watched over and over again and will never get old. The happy ending and the true Christmas spirit will get you ready for Christmas as soon as you turn it on.

Hallmark movies are underrated but really should not be. Watching them should be normalized and not laughable. The happy endings and all of the feel good romance should be appreciated. These movies could play 24/7 in my house and I would love every minute of it.

UGLY SWEATER STANDARDS

by BELLA PEARL

Ugly sweaters are in a completely different category than the classic ugly Christmas sweater. The line between a Christmas sweater that is ugly and an ugly Christmas sweater is extremely slim. The creator of the ugly Christmas sweater must navigate through the challenges such as what number of pompoms is too many. There has to be a collaboration of different fabric preferably one with some sparkles mixed in. The sweater should also contain some type of graphic or wonky looking text. The clothing item must look tacky and when staring at it should scream look at me. In more recent years ugly Christmas sweaters have upped their game with the addition of lights. These sweaters are the elite version of the common tradition and should be recognised as so. The lights are the perfect attention grabber without completely over doing the whole concept.

An ugly sweater is a flat out eye sore. When looking at such a sweater a person should think to themselves how could anyone actually want to wear this. The pattern is often a mix of stripes with some wintery design such as snowflakes, Christmas trees, snowmen, and ornaments. Ugly sweaters can be made even better when 3D aspects are present. Some sweaters might have tinsel or garland hanging off the front. One classic is a picture of Rudolph with his nose either being a large pom pom or a light. This sweater can be over popular but is a safe option for the newbies to ugly Christmas sweaters. In the last few years there has been an outbreak of sweater parties where people can show off their best ugly Christmas sweater and flex on everyone. This tacky clothing piece just adds to the fun of traditional Christmas activities.

Purchasing this sweater is quite simple and convenient. Around the holiday season most department stores carry a few options of sweaters. One of the great options is a couple sweater that match in ugliness. When buying

a sweater it does not always have to be ugly. Some people chose to create their own work of art. This becomes very risky due to the fact that the sweater might just be ugly and not actually have the fun holiday spirit. Even if the sweater turns out to be a fail, thrift stores often have ugly Christmas sweaters for a low price. Most of the sweaters found at thrift stores are compact with designs and the classic colors of the holidays.

When wearing ugly Christmas sweaters, it is important that they are only worn during the proper season. Yes, the sweaters are a wonderful way to express a fun side of fashion, but ONLY during the holiday season. These sweaters get enough attention at Christmas time and do not need more attention other times of the year despite people wanting to have fun. If a person feels the need to wear something fun they should be able to find plenty of other options that are more suitable during the other times of the year. Such options include graphic tees and fun sweatshirts. Outside of the Christmas season, if people continue to wear their tacky sweaters then the whole value of the sweaters would diminish. People would not have the joy of breaking out their special sweaters anymore because they would be wearing them all year long. Also, the ugly sweater can attract glances of confusion if it is not the winter season and diminish a person's ability to be serious.

In all reality the tradition of ugly sweaters should continue and be passed down through generations to spread a smidge of holiday spirit. This year especially would be a good time to wear fun sweaters to cheer up everyone's mood as some might be down due to the current pandemic conditions. The tradition actually became so popular that National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day was created for December 18.

Sprucing Up the Season by MAIRIN LANDIS

'Tis the season for evergreens, for pine needles stuck in your carpet, and for the sweet smell of spruce trees to make its way through your living room. Each year, we clothe these conifers in nostalgia and joy and tinsel, skirted in a velvet rug, and they stand laden in the corner of our lives for the Christmas season.

We decorate these trees with shining ornaments, twinkling lights, and strings of popcorn, cranberries, and beads, as the age-old debates inevitably ensue—do we top it with an angel or a star? For the tree itself, do you opt for a real, fresh tree, or a reusable plastic one? Do you use colored lights, or white?

Maybe the most overlooked debate, however, is the heavy decision between an elegant, shining Christmas tree and the gaudy, over the top, “looks like it rolled through a

glue factory, then a preschool” type.

You know the type-- this tree would never be caught dead in a Hallmark movie, and you would be hard pressed to find more than two or three matching ornaments. This is the tree of someone who has collected memories and paper-mache like prizes, and who puts them out on display every year when the Christmas season comes around.

I must admit, I find it difficult not to be partial to the extravagant, weighed down branches of a tree wrapped in nostalgia. It is difficult to find even a spot of bare pine on my own family's tree by the time it has been completely decorated because every single branch, every last needle, has been ordained with plastic, styrofoam, hot glue, or pipe cleaners.

This is not to say that we don't have nice ornaments, but they are

mixed in generously with mementos of our childhoods. The bells covered in Sharpie, the paper snowflakes bedecked in glitter, and the styrofoam nativity scene where Mary is wearing Joseph's beard (because my brother was not always the brightest star in the sky) have more value than the glass doves and golden ribbons.

Our family's tree speaks of our childhoods head to skirt, in crafts of various skill levels. Every bauble has a background, and every gingerbread man has a story. To some it may look ridiculous, but to us, it is representative of the entirety of the Christmas spirit.

I won't lie, the overall aesthetic of the glamorous, perfect, minimally creative trees is appealing. The color coordinating bulbs, soft white lights, and graceful trails of ribbon are beautiful. Every seasonal ad, movie, and floor display at Target is show-stoppingly gorgeous. But to

me, they are not Christmas.

Christmas is about family, and in my family, Christmas is crazy. It's a mix of friends, brothers, cousins, and grandparents, wrapped up and overwhelming. It's a mess, but it is still beautiful. This is Christmas, and this is how a Christmas tree should make you feel.

Each year, as the season winds down and advent comes to a close, the tree must inevitably retire. We de-string it of its lights, we dismount the angel from her throne, and we carefully peel layers and layers of laminated reindeer and glitter pinecones from the branches, replacing them into the broken plastic box we store them in.

Each year, a little more glitter falls to the floor, and a few more cinnamon sticks snap in half, but each year, this box returns to its storage space a little fuller than the last.

Cloudy With a Chance of A's

by LAURA LAUX

It's the last Friday of the quarter. I know, full-well, that I'm going to be disappointed by that piece of paper my Homeroom teacher hands back to me when they call us back to our homerooms at the end of the day. The suspense is killing me--will I reach my goals, finally achieving academic stardom? Or will I have failed myself, and drown in my own depths of despair and disappointment? I open the sealed envelope lying on my desk, and release the breath I had been holding in. I used to envy my classmates who talked about getting \$20 from their parents for each 'A' on their report card, but now I have lost even that hope. I would still not have any money.

It was English (unsurprisingly), but it always has been. I would have made the revered spot of first honors...had I not received a dreary 85 from the countess herself: Mrs. Henson. (Clearly, she doesn't care about my feelings). I pondered for a moment: would I be happier with my report card if it looked less like a kindergartener's practice paper on the ABCs and more like a weather forecast in the middle of July?

Imagine a world without the As, Bs, or, Cs; instead teachers could replace those harsh letters with “Sunny!” Or, when students might need slight improvement, “Partly Cloudy.” It assumes the same position as those symbols of destruction, yet offers less bold, and outright criticisms. There are so many negative connotations associated with D and F grades, and this would be a revolutionary change that would free those two letters from their fetters of negativity.

My suggestion would not only level the playing field between students and their peers, but also between students and the faculty. The YC teachers could help students change their “grades” as quickly as snow melts in PA! (With all the global-warming, of course). After all, weather develops with an ebb and flow--one day it may be terribly rainy, but the next day, the sun bursts anew through the clouds. Should, then, the dour marks of the previous school day matter? No, indeed! Let them be swept away in a great zephyrous exhalation, ushering in a tabula rasa each day. (This would also eliminate the Honor Roll, which would mean I'd be far less stormy at the end of the marking period.)

But why stop at grades? I argue that a weather-based system of symbols can be used in much of our academic lives. For example, if a student is struggling in a certain class, a teacher could pull said student aside and ask them for a weather report. Then, that same student could tell the teacher exactly how they're feeling about a certain chapter or section of the class through a variety of options (ex: “Hey Mrs, Henson, I'm feeling pretty cloudy about that last Act of Shakespeare we read, can you help me after class?”) Boom! Prob-

lem solved.

Such tactics can be applied everywhere, including places like the Cafeteria. Is it Galaxy Pizza day? You'll know for sure if you see a sun wearing cool glasses on the giant board we should install in the hallway!

I'm sure to some of you this means of communication seems arbitrary and, well, elementary (maybe this was something you even did in grade school), but it worked didn't it? Why did such a fluid and unapologetic service ever die out? Did fear of embarrassment override a student's will to improve, or a teacher's drive to correct?

Nevertheless, I vote to bring such a system into fruition. An added bonus is it could help save the feelings of die-hard scholars such as Emilio Gurany (12). Emilio says it would “motivate [him] more to succeed in chasing a sunny grade over a boring A.”

Similarly, fellow scholar Matthew Doyle (12) feels “nothing could make school better than to correspond abstract letter grades with images of weather.” He adds that this sort of grading would “definitely inspire [him] to get a golden sunshine on every test!” (not that he requires such motivation).

This method of grading not only makes more sense than letter grades, but expresses the emotional value of each rank. There is no ‘failing’ grade, but there will be a clear message in each. Whether hot or cold, rain or shine, cloudy or rainbows, teachers will gain a better grasp of how their students feel lesson-by-lesson.

Grace Keeseey (12) agrees with this, saying, “Because weather is a lot more calming and free flowing, I would like it more on my report card because it would take away some of the pressure of being defined by a letter, which,” she adds, “is stressful.” I wholeheartedly agree with Grace, (and I'm sure the entirety of high school students in America do as well).

According to Psyc.com.net, teenagers all over are “worr[ie]d about meeting academic demands, pleasing teachers and parents, and keeping up with their classmates.” Removing one aspect from this list could potentially change a teenager's whole lifestyle!

Bernie Schintz (12) thinks it's a good idea because “it's more positive and encouraging.” Additionally, “it makes school seem less competitive, which helps students relieve stress and congratulate themselves after getting a good grade.”

Appealing more to the stylistic means of this system, Alexis Weigard (12) states, “the idea would be cute, funny, and something that isn't so serious and boring,” (a nice switch up from our regular everyday routine.) Keeseey comments, “it's a lot more relatable and teachers could put pretty pictures of clouds and suns on our report cards!”



Illustrated by MAIRIN LANDIS

(similar to receiving a sticker on a test you did well on--a delightful and sought-after experience).

To be evaluated by such a means would open a world of possibilities for not only students, but educators as well. I asked some of these teachers how they would score themselves in terms of weather, and their responses were both delightful and insightful. Here's your forecast for this week:

Mr. Triggs self-identifies as a “solar eclipse,” so beware (and don't stare directly into it. He might look okay, but you shouldn't get too comfortable). He “encourages students to engage in class, but also question themselves.” Today is a good day in Room 110, where Mr. Graf is emitting the usual amount of sunshine, and the Art Room, as always, is filled with rainbows. Mrs. Euclide reports, “sunny--with a slight breeze,” giving an air of mystique to her seemingly sunny lessons.

Mr. Gilbert says, “sunny, with a storm cloud in the distance” to simulate how “students often think the class is easy...until the test” (for the record, I have never heard anyone describe Mr. Gilbert's class as ‘easy,’ but maybe that's because I'm no physicist).

Whether it be weather, colors, or even emotions, something that offers less harsh assessments of students could help mentally and academically. It would be interesting to see a brilliant rainbow on my next report card.

Curling Culture

by SEAN McKEAUGUE

Curling- the most relaxing and calming sport. It is the pinnacle of the Olympic games, and displays great concentration and focus. Curling has been humbling the Olympics since 1924, and brings in competitors of non-Olympic worthy physique. The curling teams at the Olympics could be described as a bunch of dads messing around over a weekend. Although, they are highly looked upon by millions of watchers every 4 years. But what really is curling?

Curling is a mix between the backyard game cornhole, archery, and, of course, shuffleboard. The curling lane consists of a width of about 15 feet and a length of about 150 feet. The lane is formed by freezing treated water and shaving off any abnormalities with a high precision laser. The general idea of the game is to glide a stone down an ice path and have it come to a halt within a painted bullseye-like area.

While there seems no need for more than 2 players, 4 players occupy a curling team. The reason for the 3 extra players is for the sweeping of the ice. While the skip (the person gliding the stone) sends the stone forward, the three remaining players wait for the command of the skip and his judgement of where the stone might fall. If the stone is slowing down too fast, the three players take sweepers and temporarily polish the ice so that the stone glides farther. Players are allowed to bump the opponents rocks out of bounds. Players score points by landing their stone in the 3-tier target, with the smallest, most inner ring earning them 3 points, the middle ring 2 points, and the outer ring 1 point. But was curling always this intense?

The ripe old age of 1511 birthed the curling revolution. As one the world's oldest sports still being played today, curling transformed from a game of boredom into the competitive game it is today. To be exact, in Scotland, Stirling and Perth were the first places to have records of using official curling stones, weighing around 44 pounds each. In 1924, the men's

curling program was entered into the Olympics. Unpopularity led to its recession from the Olympics, and reintroduced as a demonstration sport in 1932. The Olympics hoped that other countries would see this demotion and become interested in the sport. This tactic worked about 66 years later. In 1998, not only did curling make an appearance back in the Olympics, but it became available to female athletes as well.

Curling is one of my favorite winter Olympic sports to watch because of their intense focus and determination in such a complicated game. I personally believe that the smartest people on the ice will be crowned as winners. The game doesn't require muscle or strength. It demands skill, integrity, heart, and mind- which is what makes it a vital sport. A good friend once commented on the success of the Canadian curling team by saying, "they executed the game as if they were playing chess on ice." The sport of curling is one of the best sports to be created, and will always have a special place in my heart.

Kicking Off Christmas

by RYAN SHANKO

When Christmas comes to mind, what do you think of? Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose... right? I can nearly guarantee that football was the last thing that came to mind. Although, the NFL has had a long and complex history of competing on the gridiron, while the rest of us sit down to enjoy a delicious Christmas dinner. Way back during the dawn of the age of professional football, the season would typically end on Thanksgiving, long before Christmas Day. When the league's schedules became standardized for all teams in the mid 1930s, the championship games were held in mid-December, bringing an end to the season before the most holly-jolly day of the year. The 1943 season was the first time a professional football game was played after Christmas Day on December 26, 1943. From 1943 until the AFL-NFL merger in 1970, the league would move the NFL or AFL championship games to the 26th if they would have otherwise fallen on Christmas. After the AFL-NFL merger in the 1970 season, the league decided to move the championship game back to January 1st, making sure that no games would be played near Christmas. Although, this did not last long...

In 1971, the first and second professional football games were played on Christmas Day, and they were divisional playoff games between the Dallas Cowboys and Minnesota Vikings and the Miami Dolphins versus the Kansas City Chiefs. The Dolphins-Chiefs game ended up being the longest ever NFL game at that time, so the NFL was brought under harsh scrutiny for taking religious and Christmas traditions away from the players who had to participate in these games. As a result, the NFL did not schedule any more games on Christmas day for 17 years. From 1972-1988, the NFL did everything it could to make sure games were not played on Christmas Day, but in 1989, the league decided to try again. This game took place at 9pm to avoid getting in the way of family dinners, and was dismissed as a one time experiment. Starting in 1990, the league added a bye week to each team's schedule, making Christmas fall permanently during the regular season. Since 1989, the league has seen numerous games on Christmas Day, as long as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer's favorite day of the year fell on a Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday. From 1989 to 2009, all of the NFL's major TV network partners aired a game on Christmas Day.

These games have brought some very memorable moments, the most recent coming from a 2016 matchup between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Baltimore Ravens, which is one of the most heated rivalries in the NFL. The winter weather and yuletide spirit did not make this matchup any less exciting-- as the game came down to its the final play, the Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger threw a TD to then Steelers' WR Antonio Brown, who was met at the goal line, but managed to break the plane of the endzone with the ball. This groundbreaking play ended up winning the Steelers the AFC North Division title.

Sports have always been something that brings my family together, especially on Christmas Day. We all gather in my Grandma's living room where we can watch the games together, talk, laugh, and enjoy delicious Christmas desserts. Since there has not been a NFL game on Christmas since 2017, we have been anxiously awaiting the return of the sport we love on Santa's big night. To our excitement, this year the New Orleans Saints take on the Minnesota Vikings on Christmas Day at 4:30 pm on FOX and NFL Network!

The YC Plank Challenge

by MIA CITRONE

The dripping sweat, rushing adrenaline, and sense of pride and accomplishment that comes from physical activity is priceless, especially when there is a prize for it! Throughout the month of November, a new school-wide contest was born, which is none other than the YC Plank Challenge! This challenge displayed the athleticism of our own high schoolers and teachers while they engaged in a fun competition to see who could hold the longest forearm plank. The contestants showed their blood, sweat, and tears when they indulged in their competitive spirit in hopes of having the strongest core in the building. The contests who laid it all out on the floor were Mrs. Obermeier and Mr. Miller, seniors Wesley Bonner and Natalie Neiman, juniors Redric Pimentel and Timmy Ventura, sophomores Magdalene Motter and James Volk, and freshmen Molly Janusz and Jack Driscoll.

The process for this competition involved the contestant and I having a socially-distanced meeting where I timed them when they did their plank. As quarantine hit, I had zoom conferences with some contestants and did the same thing. Each contestants' time was kept secret, causing tensions and suspicions to grow throughout the building. As the weeks progressed, this question has remained unanswered: who can hold the longest plank?

Finally the results are in! In 5th place, with a time of 3 minutes and 36 seconds, is Wesley Bonner. In 4th place, with a time of 4 minutes, is Jack Driscoll. In 3rd place is Timmy Ventura with a time of 5 minutes and 29 seconds. In 2nd place is Mr. Miller with 5 minutes and 46 seconds. And in first place with an astonishing time of 10 minutes and 2 seconds is James Volk! James will receive a plank trophy once YC is out of quarantine (courtesy to Adam Raniere). Congratulations to all participants for their extremely impressive plank times, each proving that they have immense endurance and core strength!

A Season of STRENGTH

by MADDY PERRY

Sports are a big part of the great fall festivities here at York Catholic. During preseason, the duration of the fall season was in question because of COVID-19. Luckily, all of the teams were given a thermometer, clip board, medical masks, and ran with it- (in some cases "ran with it" is literal, I mean the cross country team has been training for months). Anyways, though some play and usual traditions were limited, teams remained grateful and optimistic. Despite the adversity and challenges our fall sports teams have faced, they all managed to be extremely successful. This success can not only be measured in their winning records and postseason qualifications, but in their attitudes when dealing with the common struggle: COVID-19. All the hard work and dedication from the players and coaches created great opportunities to play more and win several titles. Let's reflect and acknowledge all their efforts and accomplishments on this groundbreaking fall sports season!

The YC 2019 football team finished their season with a 5-5 record, but the boys showed vast improvements this year. During regular-season play they went 6-1, losing to their rival, Delone Catholic. This team is very young with great potential. They displayed their talents and teamwork under the Friday night lights!

Both the boys' and girls' soccer teams were extremely strong this year. The boys had lots of seniors, including Matthew Gick (12). He describes his regular season as "successful" due to their two wins against their "biggest competition for the last 4 years," Biglerville. These boys were able to clinch the division title, even on Biglerville's turf, which Matthew describes as a "hype" moment. After being undefeated during the regular season, they lost in the district semi-finals. Similar to the boys, the girls also had a great regular season. Sydney Mentzer highlights beating Fairfield as the team's biggest accomplishment. The girls' soccer team was able to rank third in districts, which is the best they have done in the past years and shows their recent improvement.

The volleyball team has been a powerhouse in their division for several years now. The team has many talented players in every grade that contributed to their remarkable season. Madeline Walker (12) led the team as a senior and varsity starter. When asked about their successes, she attributed it all to the hard work and dedication of the team. Since volleyball is the only indoor fall sports team, there were several more restrictions with COVID-19. The team has found strength in adversity, made many sacrifices, and played hard to do so well. This year their strength was unparalleled with an undefeated regular season and outstanding post season play, but ended with a loss in the District final against Trinity. Their biggest accomplishments were being #1 in the division and beating their rival, Delone Catholic three times.

While Cross Country is not usually as big a topic of conversation as the previous sports mentioned, they deserve immense recognition. Everyone sees the runners in the morning, then coming to homeroom with wet hair, but not many people fathom the endurance and strength XC requires. This year, both the boys and girls XC teams demanded attention with all their success. Gabbie Tully (11), a captain of the team, mentions that the most memorable moment for her along with the rest of her teammates was when the girls won districts for the first time ever in school history. Also, our runners made it the whole way to States, which is the farthest that any of our fall sports teams have gotten in the postseason.